

Goo Goo Dolls rock Ramstein Air Base

by Debbie Southee, Marketing Director, 86th Services

Suddenly the lights went out and before your blinking eyes became accustomed to the darkness, the crowd erupted as stage lights exploded in a maze of psychedelic colors. The first piercing riff from an electric guitar left you no doubt that you were in the middle of a rock concert. Johnny Rzeznik, Robbie Takac (both shown at right) and Mike Malinen, better known as the Goo Goo Dolls, one of America's hottest rock



band had just taken the stage. They were determined to rock the hundreds of US servicemen and women who had braved the December cold wind and rain outside Hangar 3 on Ramstein Air Base to be entertained by their rock heroes. And entertained they were. The Goo Goo Dolls, still fresh from performing four concerts for the Navy, rocked and rolled through 90 minutes of their 12-year record-making career. Everyone sang along with their most popular songs "Iris" written and performed for the hit-movie "City of Angels" and "Slide" a youth anthem of today. Die hard fans of the Dolls, and there were plenty of them, mouthed every lyric and screamed for Rzeznik to play their favorite songs.

"What a great opportunity for 86 Services to bring in a hot contemporary group like the Goo Goo Dolls to the Kaiserslautern Military Community (KMC)" said Jim Hale, 86th Services Community Support Flight Chief and Base Project Officer for the show. "It created an air of excitement and anticipation throughout the community during the hectic holiday season." The concert culminated weeks of planning and logistical challenges involving the main base agencies including Security Police, Civil Engineering, Fire, Safety and Operations. The results were obviously worth it according to the crowd. "This is the best Christmas present I've ever had" said Army Specialist Joe Worth who had just returned from a deployment in the Balkans. "I can't believe these guys came to Ramstein to play just for us".

The crowd was decidedly younger than the normal gathering for holiday concerts at Ramstein. "The concert targeted a younger market which included first term airman and dorm residents" observed Hale. "This provides further proof of the Air Force's commitment to provide quality of life programs which positively affect retention." Johnny Rzeznik, the group's lead singer, was nearly one of those first term airmen. "

I thought about joining the Air Force when I was about 16, “ he said. After graduating from high school he decided to pursue his musical aspirations instead. Touring the European bases and seeing the military up close made him reflect on his decision. “There is a real, human side to it. I am 34 years old. These guys take on a helluva lot more responsibility than I did (at their age). I couldn’t do it. I respect these guys – and women- very much.”

All too soon the concert was over and the Goo Goo Dolls prepared to fly into snow covered Eagle Base, Bosnia to their last show for deployed military before flying back for Christmas in their hometown of Buffalo. It was not all disappointment though, they said they would be back next year!



Backstage pass winners Katie Thompson and Tiffany Jones pose with the GooGoo Dolls before the concert.